

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An in-vehicle occupant image pickup apparatus comprising:
 - an image pickup unit for shooting a face of an occupant of a vehicle,
 - 5 wherein the image pickup unit is located in a blind spot for the occupant, behind a hood that is provided in a dashboard of the vehicle; and
 - a mirror installed in an instrument panel on the dashboard, wherein reflection in the mirror enables the image pickup unit to pick up an image of the face of the occupant

10

2. An in-vehicle occupant image pickup apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein the image pickup unit includes an infrared/near-infrared camera that picks up an image of the face, and an infrared/near-infrared-emitting element that illuminates the face; and
 - 15 wherein the mirror is made up of a cold filter that reflects infrared/near-infrared rays and transmits visible rays.

20

3. An in-vehicle occupant image pickup apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein the image pickup unit includes a camera that picks up an image of the face;

and

wherein the mirror is made up of a half mirror.

25

4. An in-vehicle occupant image pickup apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the image pickup unit includes:

a camera that picks up an image of the face and outputs a digital image signal;

5 a digital image processor that manipulates the digital image signal; and

a substrate on which the camera and the digital image processor are both mounted.

5. An in-vehicle instrument panel unit which is equipped with an in-
10 vehicle image pickup apparatus according to claim 1.